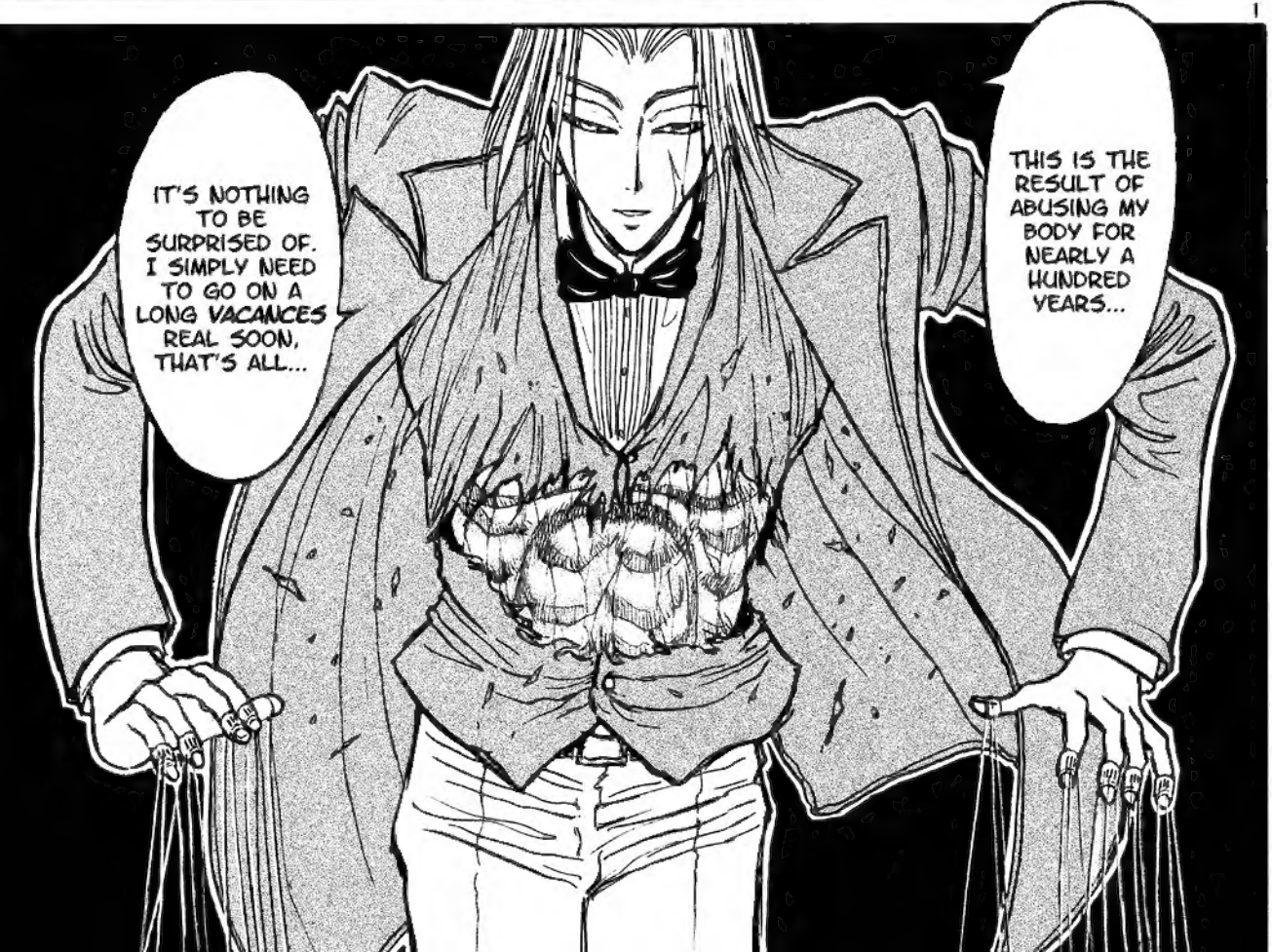
ACT 69 — THE NIGHT BEFORE DEPARTURE

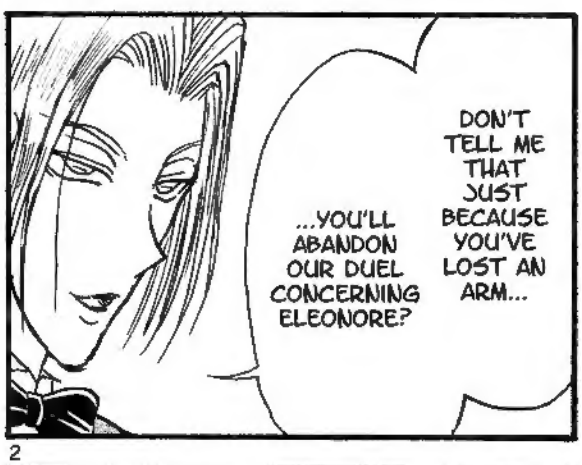

THIS IS THE RESULT OF ABUSING MY BODY FOR NEARLY A HUNDRED YEARS...
IT'S NOTHING TO BE SURPRISED OF. I SIMPLY NEED TO GO ON A LONG VACANCES REAL SOON, THAT'S ALL...

I CAN FEEL THAT MY END IS NEAR.
...THIS PAST YEAR, MY LIFE FORCE HAS BEEN WEAKEN-ING...

DESPITE BEING A SHIROGANE WITH INVINCIBLE HEALING ABILITIES, YOU STILL NEEDED A CANE TO WALK, AND THE WOUND IN YOUR FACE WOULDN'T HEAL.
I... HAD A SLIGHT FEELING ABOUT IT...

IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE AT THIS POINT.
YOU KNOW HOW THIS GOES.

...TO STOP THE PETRIFICA-TION...?
...IS THERE ANY WAY...


...YOU'LL ABANDON OUR DUEL CONCERNING ELEONORE?
DON'T TELL ME THAT JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE LOST AN ARM...

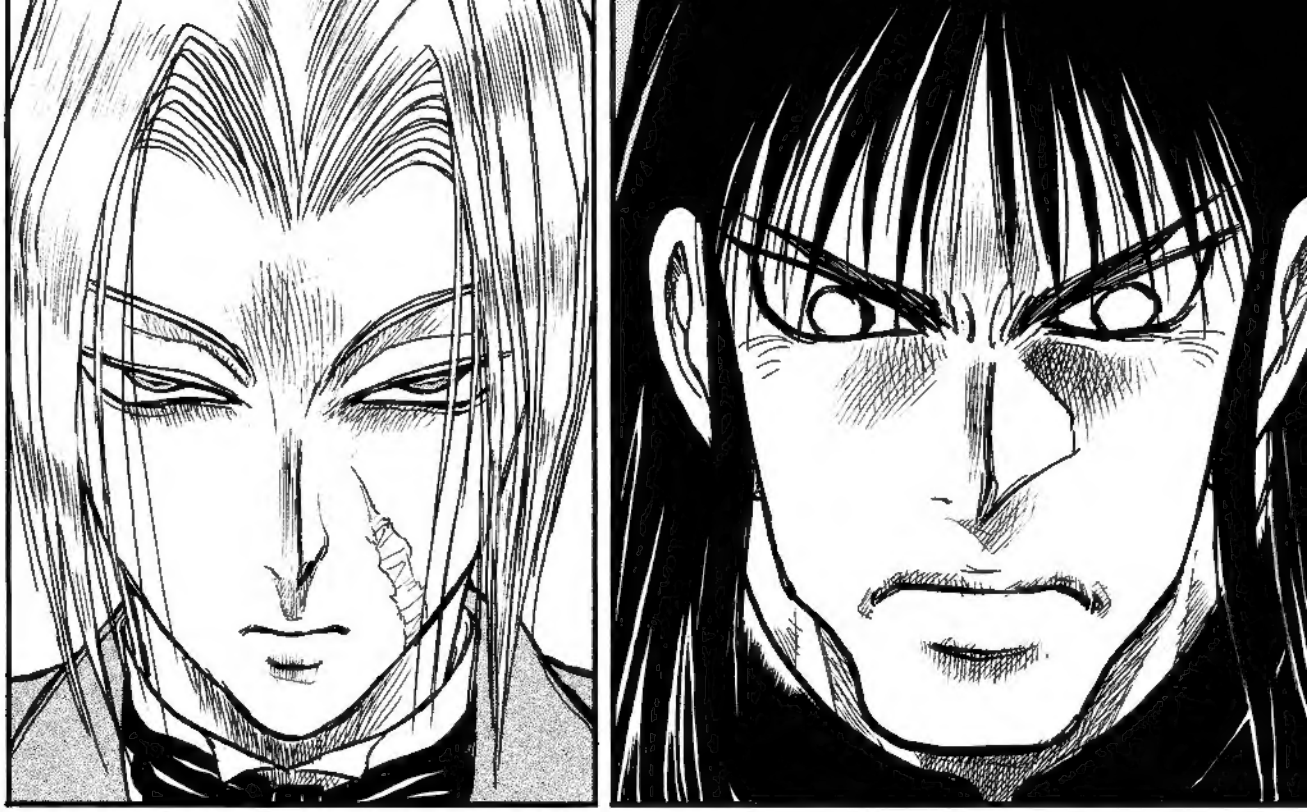
2

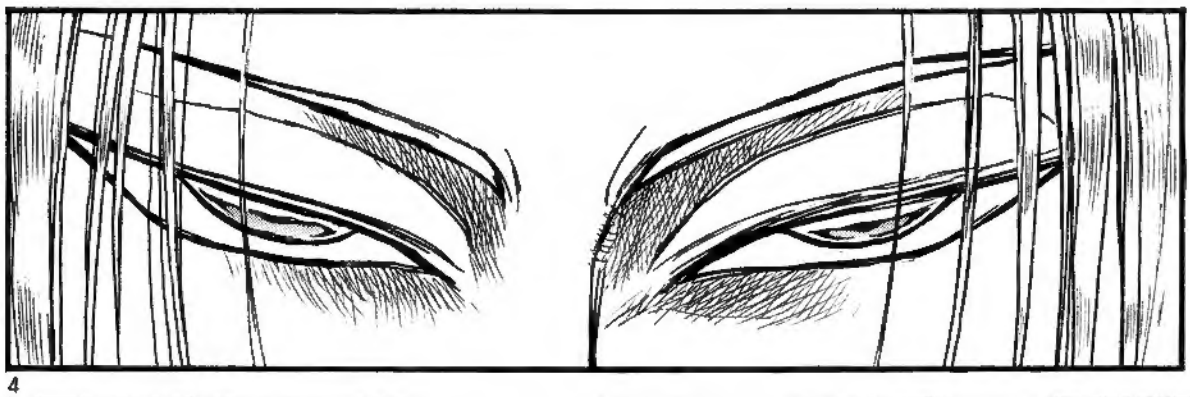
...I-I CAN'T FIGHT YOU WHEN YOU'RE ALREADY DYING... GUY...

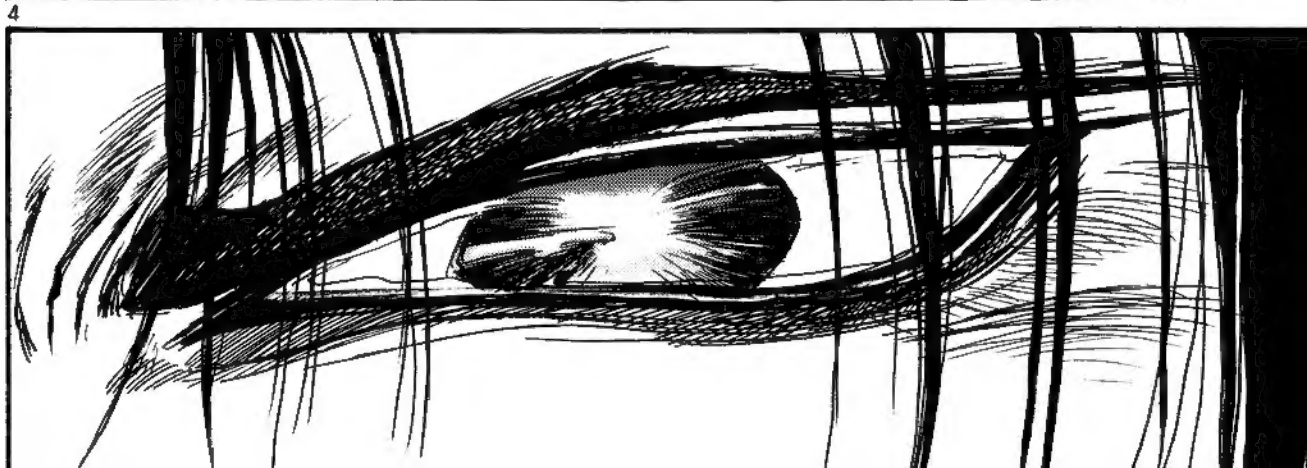
NOW, LET'S RESUME OUR BATTLE.
CLACK
AH?!

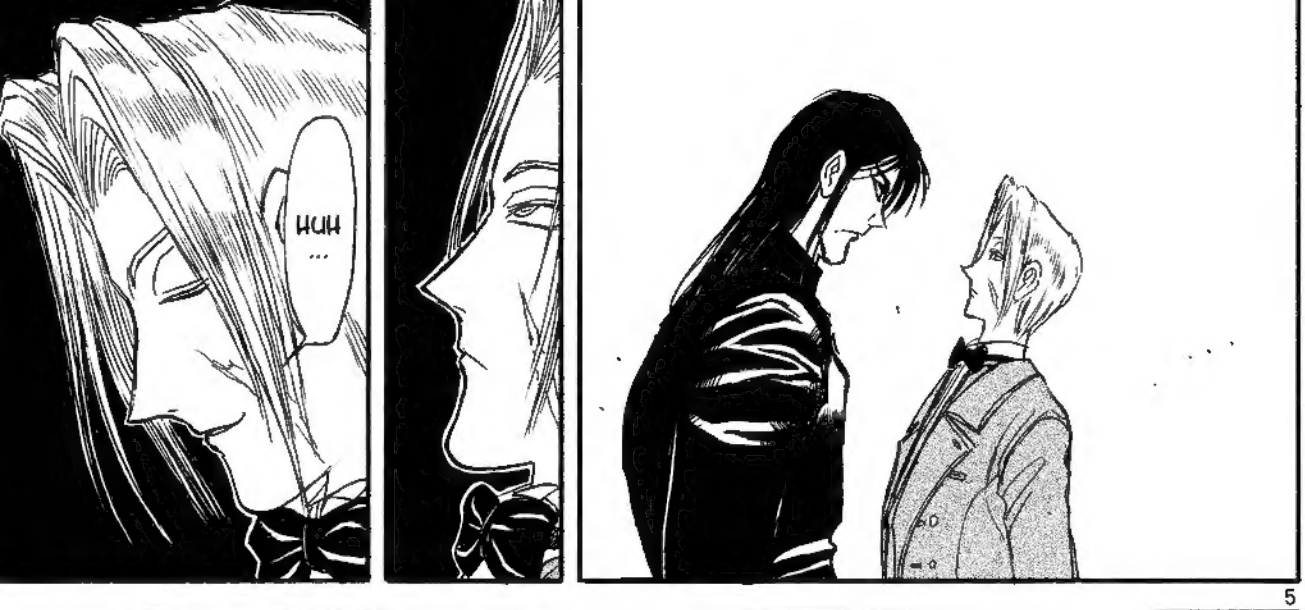
...I... CAN'T PROMISE THAT...
DO YOU PROMISE YOU WON'T KILL ELEONORE AFTER I'M GONE?
TAP
TAP
DO I WIN THIS DUEL?
THEN, YOU SURRENDER?
YOU MUST ANSWER MY QUESTION.
...I SEE... THEN, NARUMI...

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT ELEONORE?
NARUMI! AS A MAN...
THIS IS COMPLETELY UNRELATED TO WHETHER OR NOT YOU FEEL RESPONSIBLE OR OBLIGATED TO KILL HER...








HUH...

5

WHAT THE HELL? WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?!

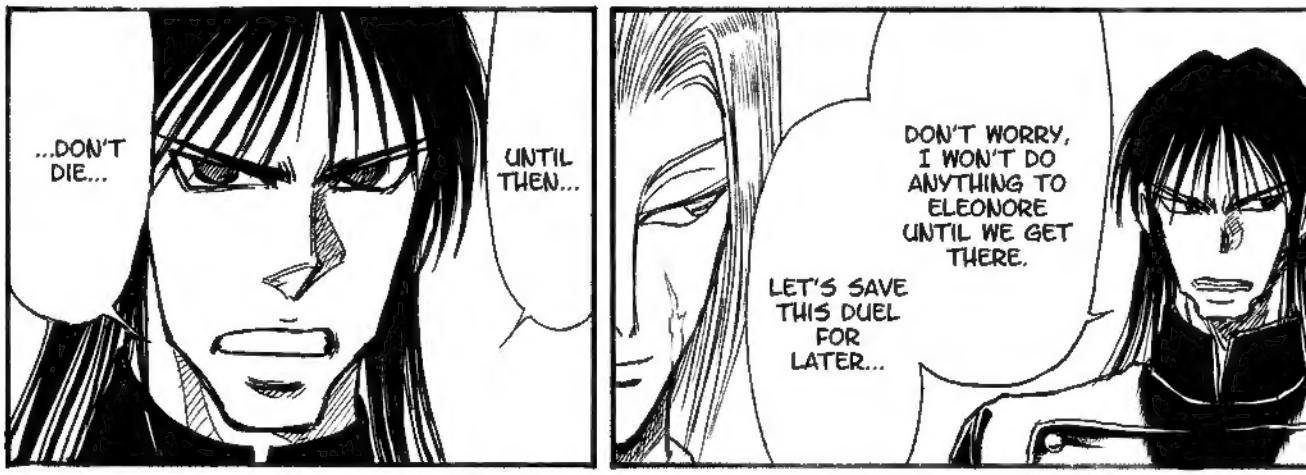
WHA...
YOU'RE TOO EASY TO READ...

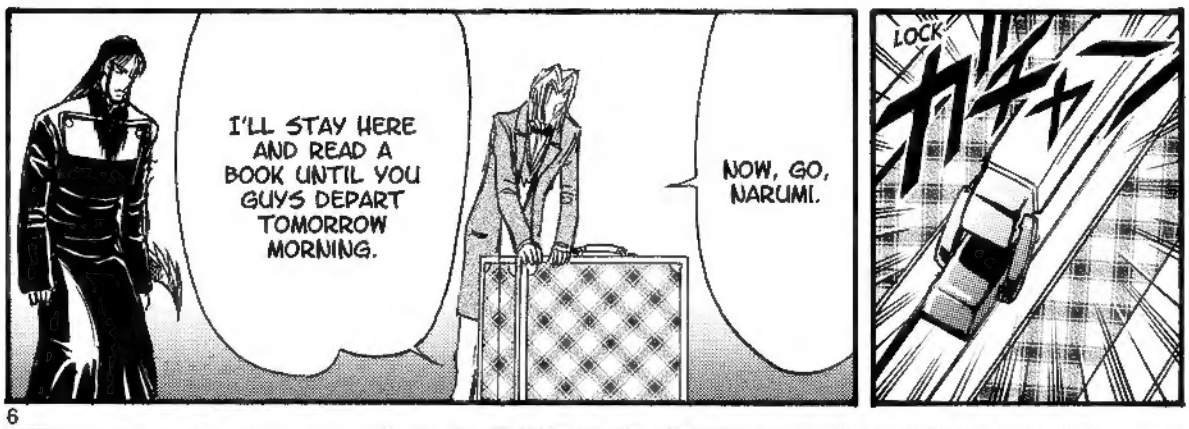
Y-YOU SAY THAT, BUT YOU BUSTED MY ARM!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT IT ANYMORE. I LOST ALL MY MOTIVATION AFTER YOU TORE MY SHIRT...

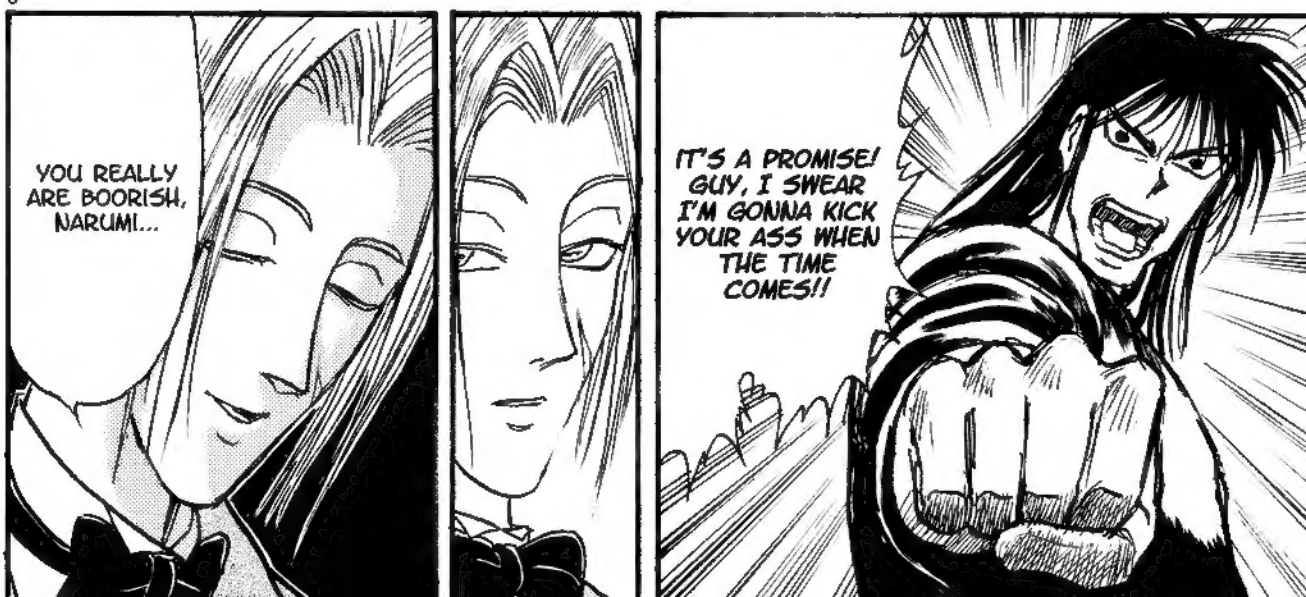
...AWW, WHAT WILL YOU DO ABOUT THIS SHIRT? IT'S A TOP-OF-THE-LINE CUSTOM-MADE HAUTE COUTURE, YOU KNOW?
I MEAN THAT YOU'RE A VIOLENT TOPKNOT IDIOT.
WHAT ABOUT OUR DUEL?!

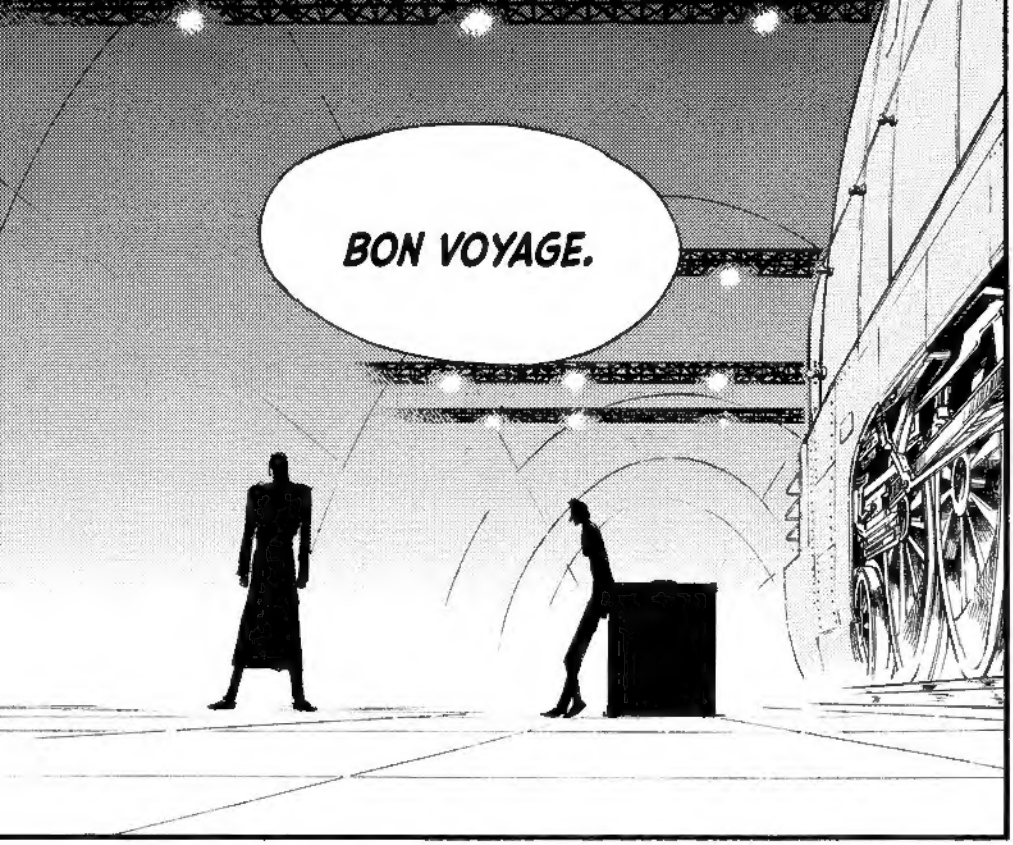
FINE, JUST ASK YOU TO REPAIR IT.
...!!
DESPITE HOW SHE LOOKS, ELEONORE IS AN EXCELLENT MECHANIC.

...GUY, YOU'RE GOING AHEAD WITH FOU AND THE OTHERS TO PROTECT THE LAUNCH SITE IN RUSSIA, RIGHT...?
FROM NOW ON, LET THEM HANDLE THE REPAIRS TO YOUR BODY.

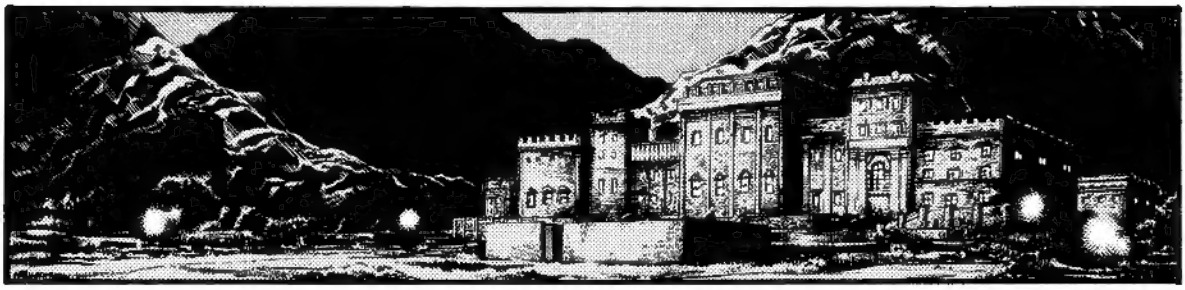

...DON'T DIE...
UNTIL THEN...
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T DO ANYTHING TO ELEONORE UNTIL WE GET THERE.
LET'S SAVE THIS DUEL FOR LATER...


I'LL STAY HERE AND READ A BOOK UNTIL YOU GUYS DEPART TOMORROW MORNING.
NOW, GO, NARUMI.
LOCK
カチャ

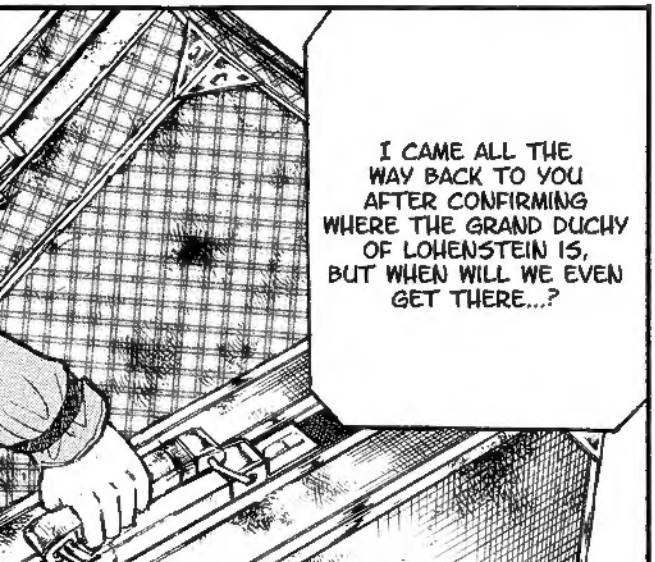

YOU REALLY ARE BOORISH, NARUMI...
IT'S A PROMISE! GUY, I SWEAR I'M GONNA KICK YOUR ASS WHEN THE TIME COMES!!

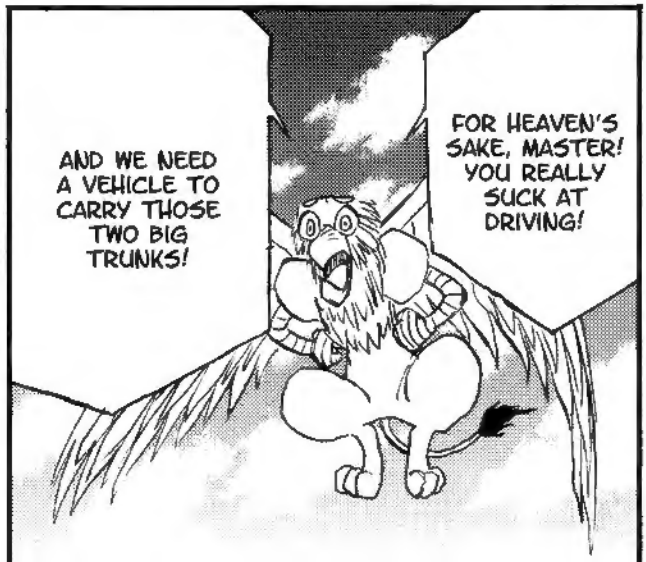

BON VOYAGE.

HAVEN'T I TOLD YOU BEFORE? AT TIMES LIKE THIS, SAY SOMETHING WITH MORE *ESPRIT*, SUCH AS...



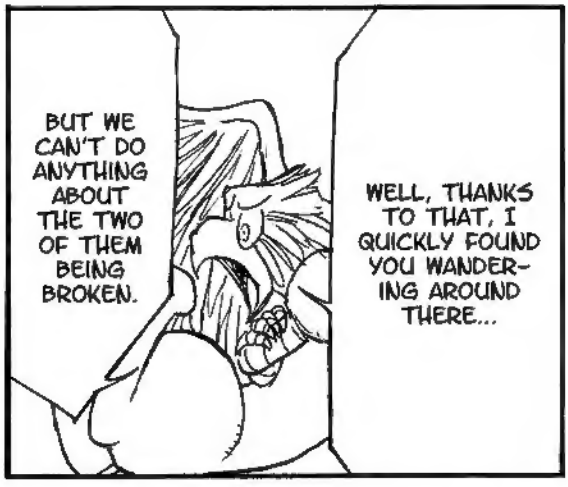
IN A CERTAIN TOWN IN THE EASTERN PART OF FRANCE...
ONE DAY BEFORE ALL OF THIS...

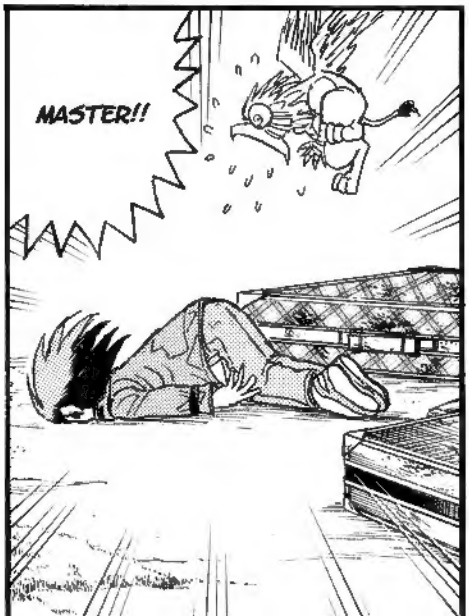

I CAME ALL THE WAY BACK TO YOU AFTER CONFIRMING WHERE THE GRAND DUCHY OF LOHENSTEIN IS, BUT WHEN WILL WE EVEN GET THERE...?

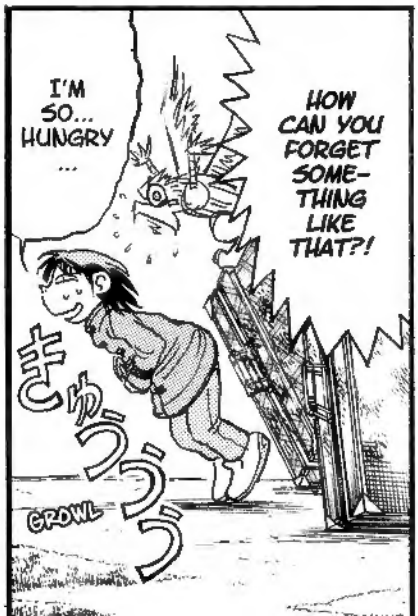

AND WE NEED A VEHICLE TO CARRY THOSE TWO BIG TRUNKS!
FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, MASTER! YOU REALLY SUCK AT DRIVING!

I'M ONLY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, GRIPPON-KUN. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DRIVE!
BESIDES, I NEED JACK-O AND ARLEQUIN TO FIGHT.
THAT'S WHY YOU BOTHERED TO LOOK FOR THEM IN THAT RUN-DOWN CASTLE, RIGHT?

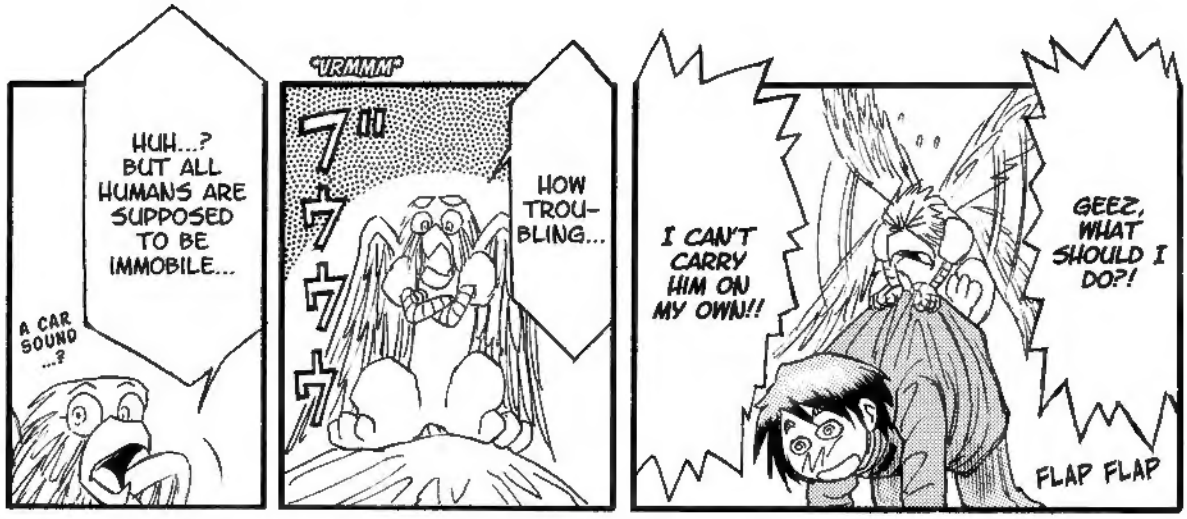
...HEY, MASTER, WHAT'S WRONG?!

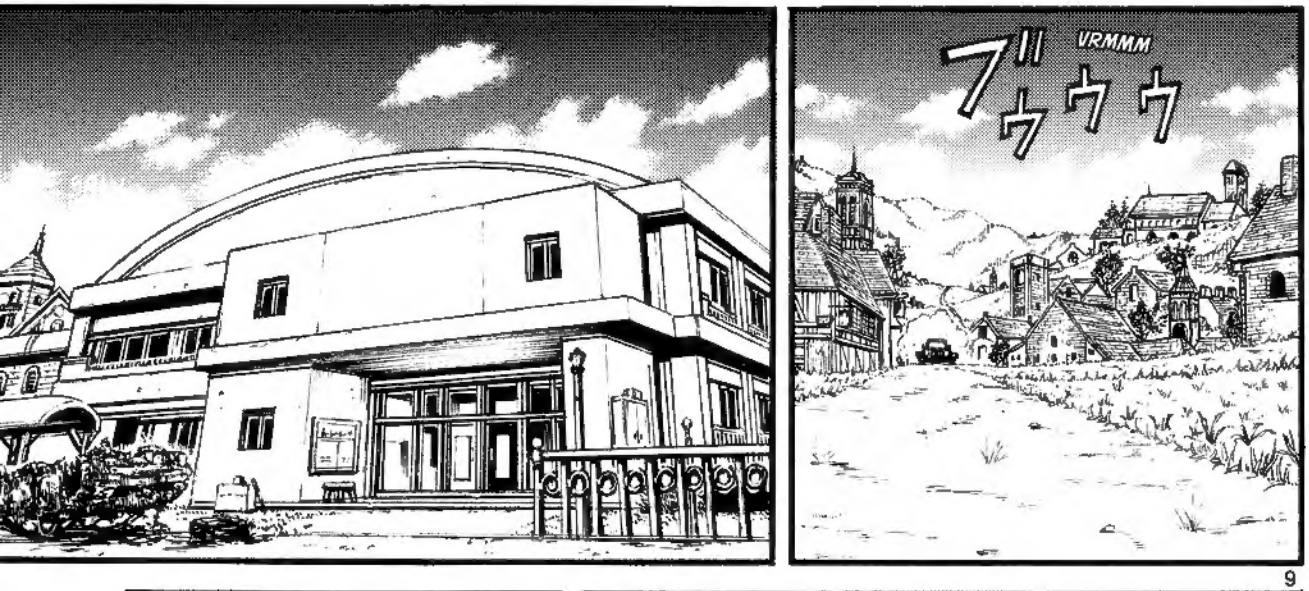

BUT WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE TWO OF THEM BEING BROKEN.
WELL, THANKS TO THAT, I QUICKLY FOUND YOU WANDERING AROUND THERE...


MASTER!!


I'M SO... HUNGRY ...
HOW CAN YOU FORGET SOMETHING LIKE THAT?!
きゅうう
GROWL

N-NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I HAVEN'T EATEN ANYTHING SINCE WE WENT TO MONT-SAINT-MICHEL...
GROWL


A CAR SOUND ...?
HUH...? BUT ALL HUMANS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE IMMOBILE...
"URMMM"
ウウウウウ
HOW TROU-BLING...
I CAN'T CARRY HIM ON MY OWN!!
GEEZ, WHAT SHOULD I DO?!
FLAP FLAP


URMMM
ウウウウ

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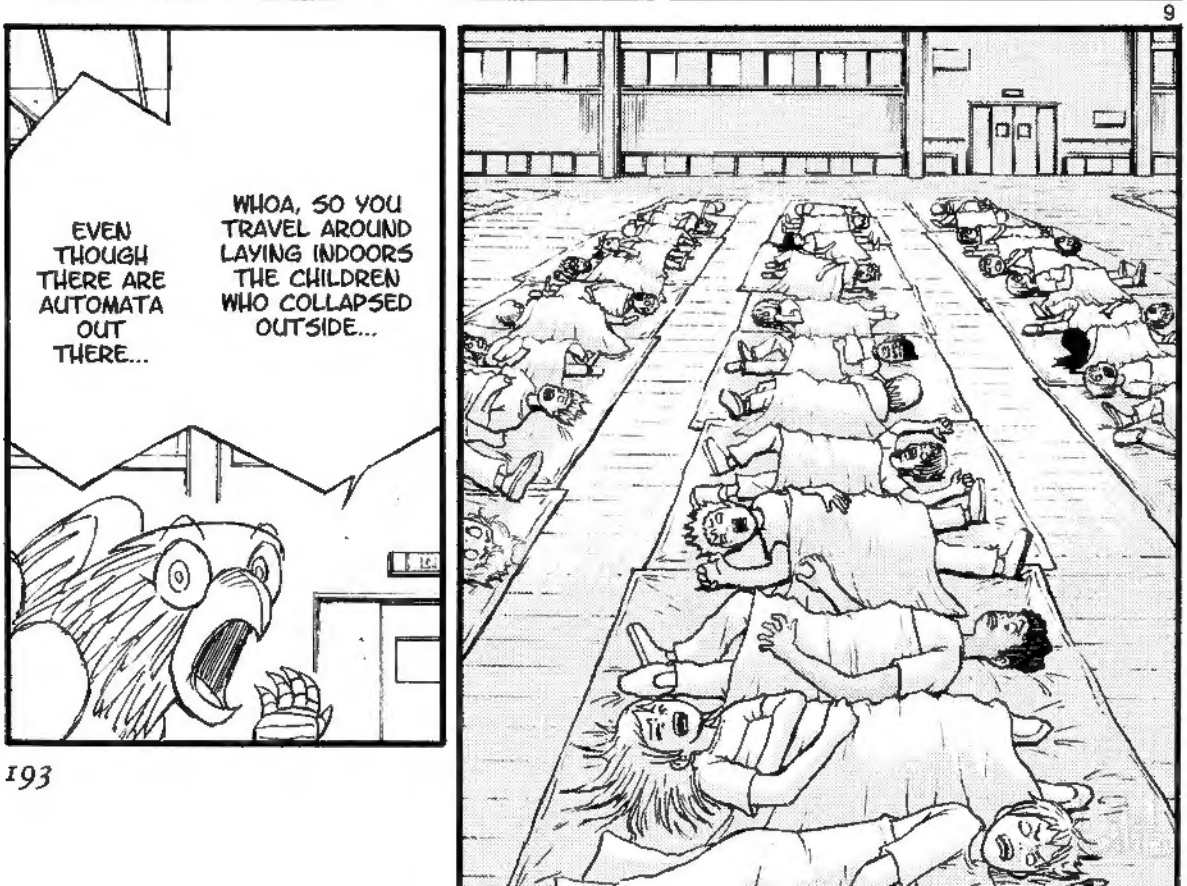
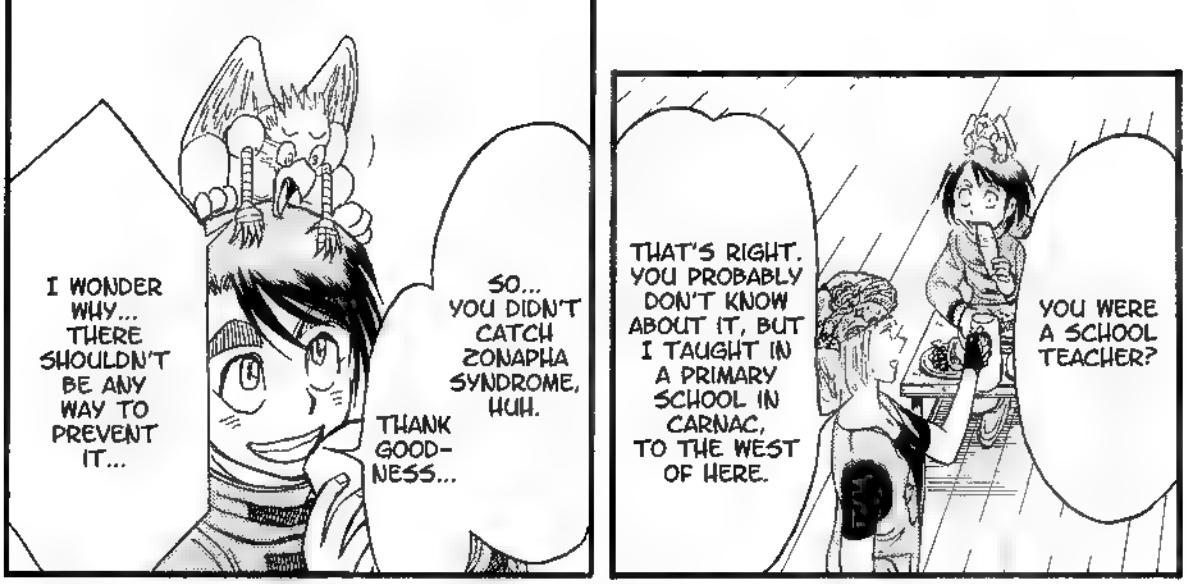

EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE AUTOMATA OUT THERE...
WHOA, SO YOU TRAVEL AROUND LAYING INDOORS THE CHILDREN WHO COLLAPSED OUTSIDE...

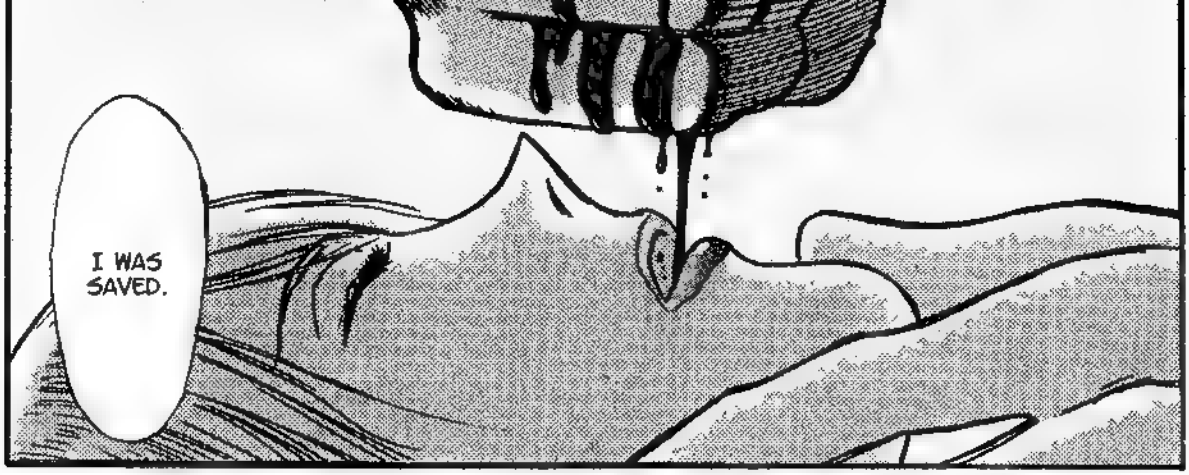
DAMN YOU, DOLL!
I WAS SURE YOU WERE GOING TO DESTROY ME!
YEAH, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE ME FOR THAT, BIRDIE.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE ONE OF THEM...
POWER
THANKS, MISS!

MASARU... MY NAME IS SAIGA MASARU.
I'M SHARON MONTFORT. I USED TO TEACH KIDS YOUR AGE BEFORE THE WORLD TURNED LIKE THIS.
IS IT GOOD, WORN-OUT JAPANESE KID?
MUNCH MUNCH
がつがつ
YUP!


I WONDER WHY... THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY WAY TO PREVENT IT...
SO... YOU DIDN'T CATCH ZONAPHA SYNDROME, HUH.
THANK GOOD-NESS...
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU PROBABLY DON'T KNOW ABOUT IT, BUT I TAUGHT IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN CARNAC, TO THE WEST OF HERE.
YOU WERE A SCHOOL TEACHER?

I... HAVE DIED ONCE.
...IT MIGHT BE BE-CAUSE OF THAT...
...YES, I THOUGHT IT WAS STRANGE, TOO...

BUT...
WE WERE SAVED BY SOME PEOPLE, BUT I WAS TOO SLOW... IN THE END, THEY KILLED ME...
IT WAS REALLY SCARY... THOSE MONSTERS SUCKED HUMAN BLOOD...
WHEN I WAS A TEACHER, THE SCHOOL BUS MY STUDENTS AND I WERE RIDING WAS ATTACKED BY AUTOMATA.
HUH?!


I WAS SAVED.

THAT MAN... WAS HE A SHIROGANE, BY ANY CHANCE...?
...MADE ME DRINK HIS BLOOD...
...AND I CAME BACK TO LIFE...
A VERY STRONG MAN...

IT SEEMED LIKE HE PRACTICED SOME EASTERN MARTIAL ART.

HE LOOKED YOUNG... AROUND HIS TWEN-TIES.
HE WAS TALL... AND VERY MUSCU-LAR...

THAT MUST BE IT, MASTER! SOME SHIROGANE JUST HAPPENED TO PASS BY!

OH... UHUHUH ...
HE HAD POINTY EYES AND LONG BLACK HAIR...

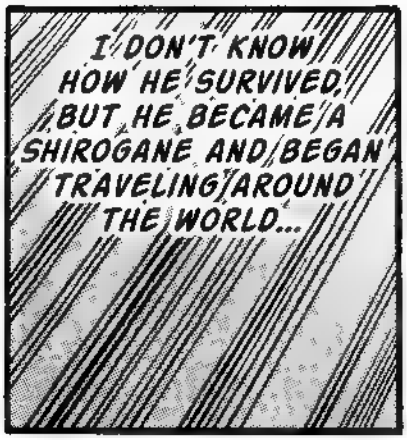
NO WAY, THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM!
MAYBE IT WAS SOMEONE I KNOW?

I BET HE'S FROM THE SAME COUNTRY AS YOU...

THE HANDSOME MAN WHO WAS WITH HIM...
IT WAS VERY HARD TO CATCH IT, BUT...

Y-YES.
HIS NAME!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HIS NAME WAS?

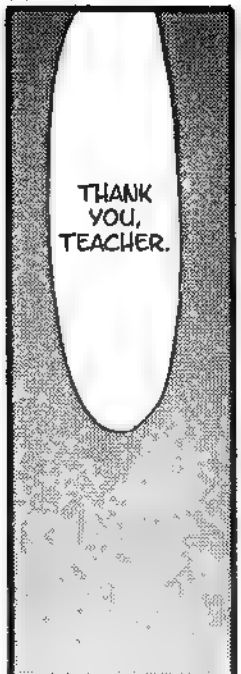
...CALLED HIM "NARMI", OR "NARUME"...


I DON'T KNOW HOW HE SURVIVED, BUT HE BECAME A SHIROGANE AND BEGAN TRAVELING AROUND THE WORLD...

AH...
AHH...

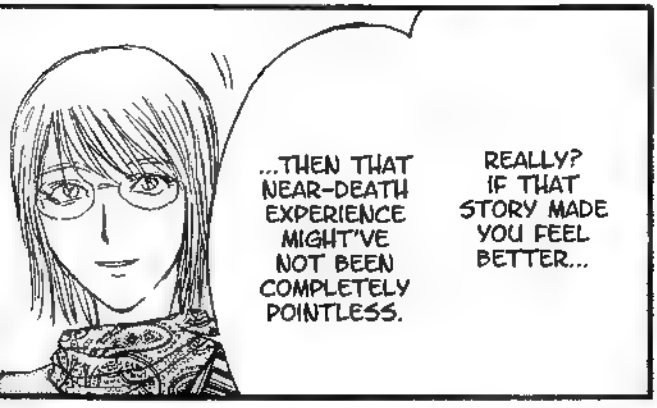
THANK GOOD-NESS...

HE'S ALIVE!
HE'S ALIVE!! NARUMI-NIICHAN IS ALIVE!!!


THANK YOU, TEACHER.

HEY, WHAT'S WRONG?!
うわあああん
THANK GOOD-NESS...

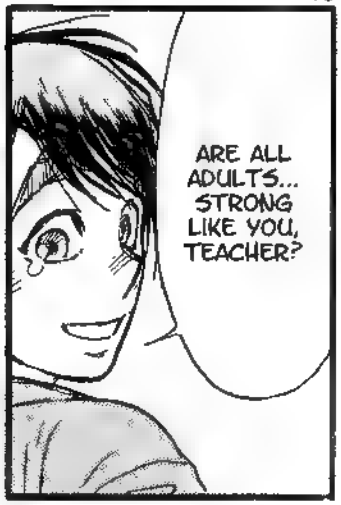
AND I COULDN'T HAVE EATEN ALL THAT FOOD BY MYSELF.
IT'S FINE, I ONLY SHOWED YOU THE WAY TO THE REPAIR SHOP AND THE JUNK SHOP.
HOORAY! JACK-O IS ALL BETTER NOW!

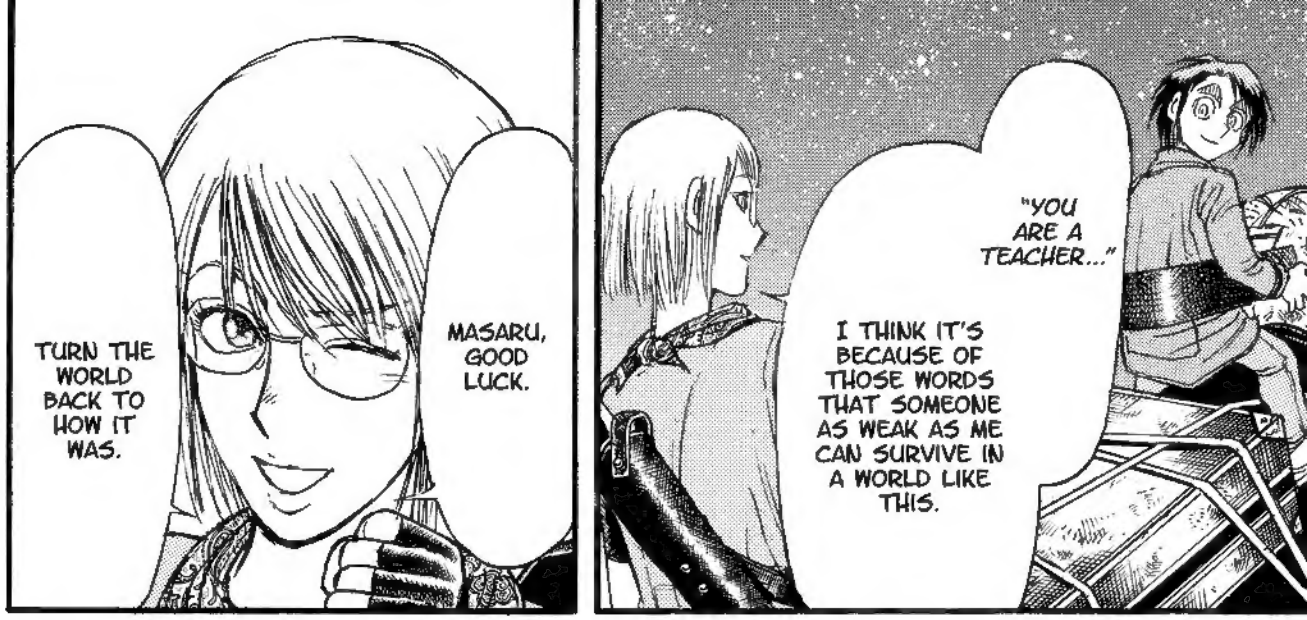

...THEN THAT NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE MIGHT'VE NOT BEEN COMPLETELY POINTLESS.
REALLY? IF THAT STORY MADE YOU FEEL BETTER...

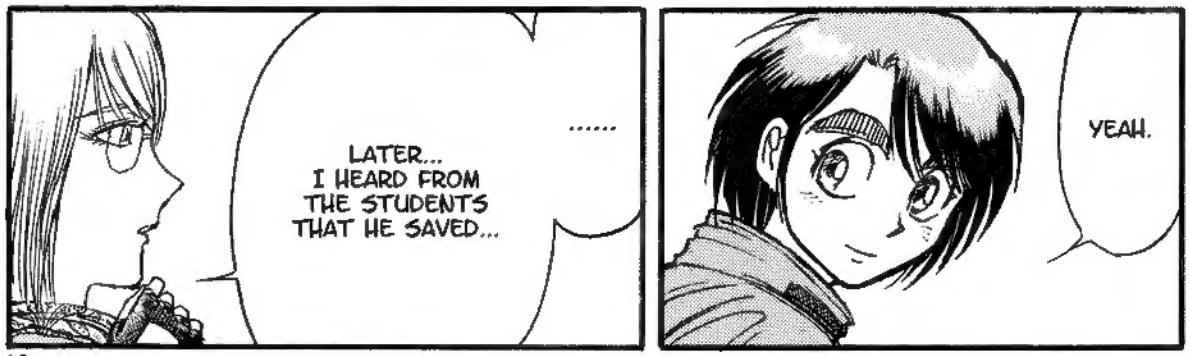
YEAH, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU TOLD ME SOMETHING THAT MADE ME REALLY HAPPY...

HAVE COURAGE, YOU ARE A TEACHER, RIGHT?
YOU CAN DO ANYTHING FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN!

WELL, DURING THAT INCIDENT, THE OLD WOMAN WHO HELPED US TOLD ME...


ARE ALL ADULTS... STRONG LIKE YOU, TEACHER?

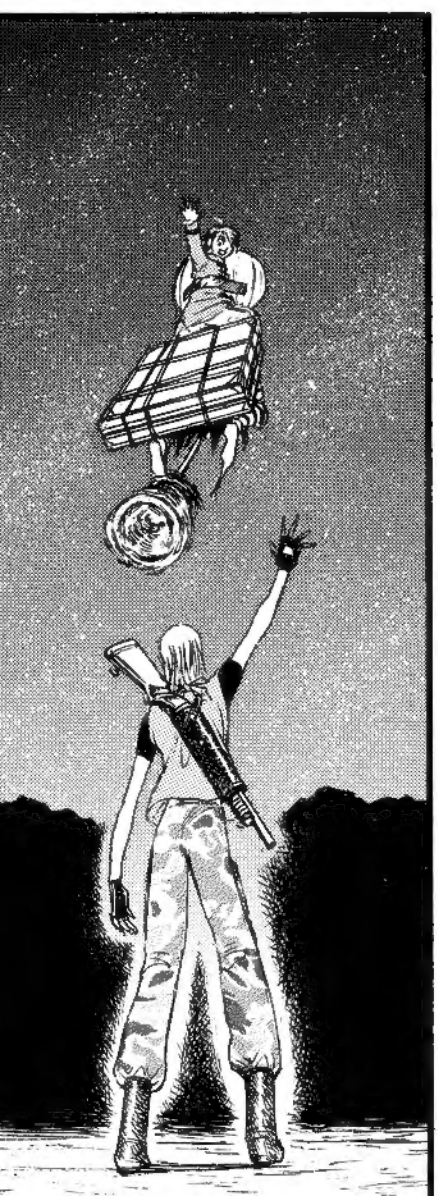

TURN THE WORLD BACK TO HOW IT WAS.
MASARU, GOOD LUCK.
"YOU ARE A TEACHER..."
I THINK IT'S BECAUSE OF THOSE WORDS THAT SOMEONE AS WEAK AS ME CAN SURVIVE IN A WORLD LIKE THIS.

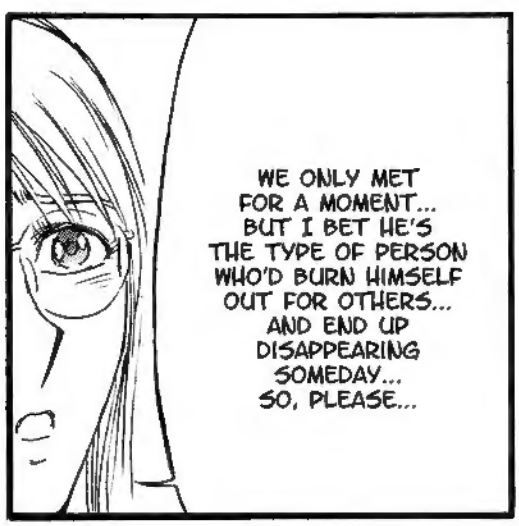

LATER... I HEARD FROM THE STUDENTS THAT HE SAVED...
.....
YEAH.

16

SO... IF YOU MEET HIM... CAN YOU TELL HIM SOMETHING FOR ME?
HE SAID... "THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE CHANCE TO SAVE YOU ALL"...
...THAT HE CRIED AFTER SAVING US...

"PLEASE, BE SAVED YOURSELF NEXT TIME."
IT'S A WEIRD THING TO SAY, BUT TELL HIM...

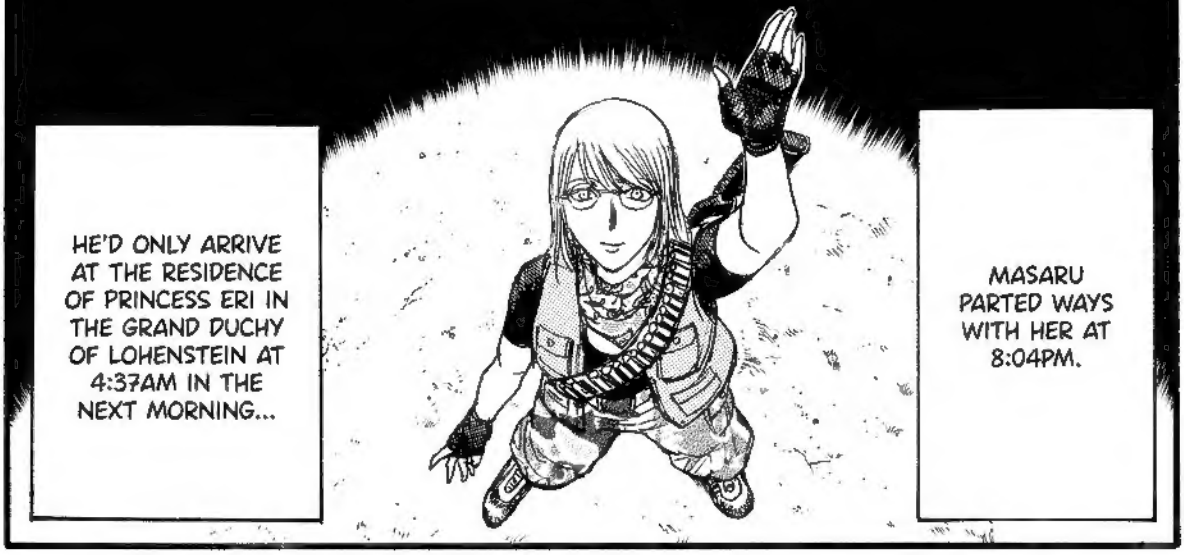


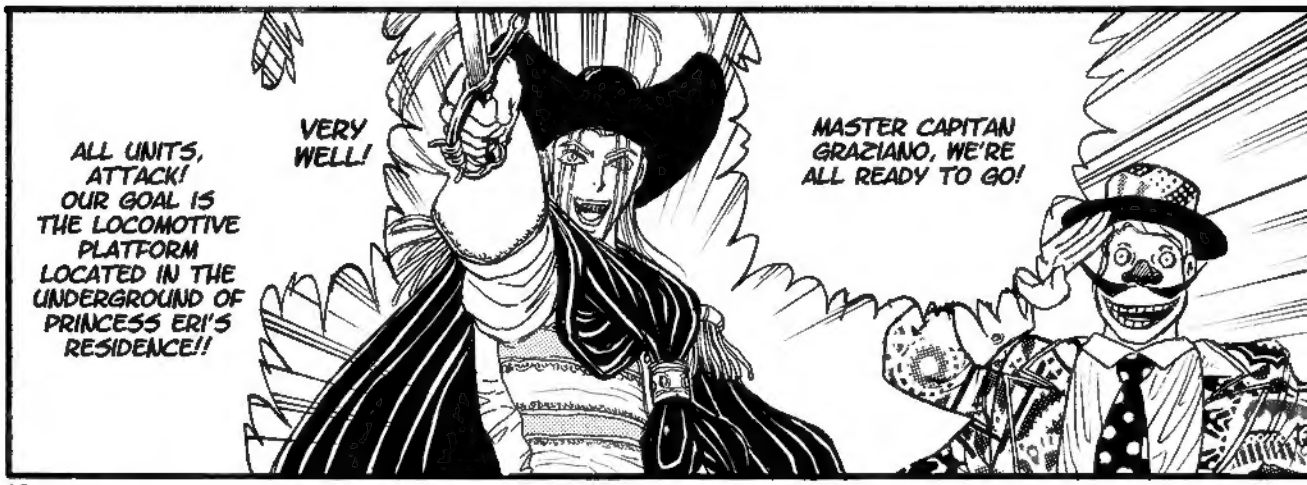

WE ONLY MET FOR A MOMENT... BUT I BET HE'S THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO'D BURN HIMSELF OUT FOR OTHERS... AND END UP DISAPPEARING SOMEDAY... SO, PLEASE...

"BE SAVED... YOUR-SELF..."

...TO TELL HIM.
I'LL MAKE SURE...

YEAH.
.....


HE'D ONLY ARRIVE AT THE RESIDENCE OF PRINCESS ERI IN THE GRAND DUCHY OF LOHENSTEIN AT 4:37AM IN THE NEXT MORNING...
MASARU PARTED WAYS WITH HER AT 8:04PM.


ALL UNITS, ATTACK! OUR GOAL IS THE LOCOMOTIVE PLATFORM LOCATED IN THE UNDERGROUND OF PRINCESS ERI'S RESIDENCE!!
VERY WELL!
MASTER CAPITAN GRAZIANO, WE'RE ALL READY TO GO!

...STARTED CHARGING TOWARDS ERI'S RESIDENCE.
THAT WAS EXACTLY THE TIME WHEN ALMOST ALL OF THE AUTOMATA FORCES...

DO YOU LIKE KARAKURI CIRCUS? DO YOU HAVE SCANLATION EXPERIENCE?

WE NEED YOUR HELP

WE ARE LOOKING FOR:

TYPESETTERS

JOIN OUR SERVER IF YOU WANT TO HELP:
DISCORD.GG/WEHERS9CRS